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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PRM/ANE, NEA/ARN AND NEA/NGA

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TAGS: PHUM PREF PREL IZ LE JO

SUBJECT: Monitoring and Evaluating ICMC's Humanitarian Assistance Program for Vulnerable Iraqis in Lebanon

REF: A) PRM Monitoring Instructions of 9/29/03

B) 03 Amman 3308

1. As requested ref a, regional refcoord and Embassy Beirut polFSN monitored ICMC's humanitarian assistance program for vulnerable Iraqis in Lebanon on March 12 (cooperative agreement SPRMCO03CA119). In addition to meetings at the ICMC/Caritas office, we also visited Baabda Hospital and Notre Dame du Perpetuel Secours School, which provide services to Iraqis under the grant, and met four beneficiary families in their homes. Refcoord, PRM/ANE program officer and emboffs also met with ICMC and Caritas officials in October 2003.

A. On March 12, we met with ICMC Forced Migration Specialist (and project manager) Jim Kelly, Caritas Migrants Center Coordinator Najla Chahda and project officer Isabelle Saade, who supervises the three other social workers supported by the grant. Unpaid student interns also work on the project as part of their university training.

B. After a slow first year (ref b), ICMC and its local implementing partner Caritas are running a solid, well-performing project that is reaching vulnerable Iraqis throughout Lebanon. The project is meeting and in some cases exceeding program objectives and has developed alternative plans to meet the one objective, vocational training, where it is falling short. The project addresses PRM cross-cutting policy goals of protection, women, children and reproductive health. However, as more time passes since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, it is increasingly difficult to classify Iraqis in Lebanon as refugees or asylum-seekers. Most appear to be irregular movers in search of a new, permanent home. While their illegal status leaves them vulnerable in terms of access to services, ICMC acknowledges that humanitarian assistance to irregular Iraqi movers should not last indefinitely.

C. Since the current grant began on September 1, ICMC has provided:

- outpatient medical services to 399 vulnerable Iraqis (vice a target of 700 in 12 months)
- inpatient medical services to 74 vulnerable Iraqis (vice a target of 150 in 12 months)
- humanitarian assistance to 85 vulnerable Iraqis (vice a target of 250)
- primary school support to 141 vulnerable Iraqis (vice a target of 120)
- non-formal education to 130 vulnerable Iraqis (vice a target of 150); and
- vocational training to 6 Iraqis (vice a target of 100)

Project Manager Jim Kelly reported that 40 percent of ICMC's beneficiaries - 127 of 318 families -- are new cases (vice a target of 30 percent). Of the new caseload, 57 families are recent arrivals in Lebanon, all of whom left Iraq after August 2003. Kelly commented that the Iraqi population flow seems to go both ways in Lebanon. While many new arrivals have come to Lebanon in search of security and better economic prospects, many Iraqi men are returning home without their families to find work and reestablish proper homes before sending for their families. Kelly said a significant number of these Iraqi men have simply disappeared, leaving wives and children in increasingly vulnerable situations in Lebanon.

D. Kelly acknowledged that ICMC is behind target for the humanitarian assistance and vocational training components of the project. Kelly attributed the shortfall in humanitarian assistance packages to two factors. First, because ICMC was slow in implementing the FY02 grant for vulnerable Iraqis (ref b), most of the humanitarian assistance items funded under the FY02 grant were provided in the spring and summer of 2003. Vulnerable Iraqis covered under the previous grant simply do not have a need for additional blankets, mattresses, cooking utensils, etc., and all 85 beneficiaries under the current grant are new clients. Kelly also said that social workers are reluctant to use humanitarian assistance, for fear of creating expectations and jealousy among the Iraqi community. Kelly said he routinely counsels social workers on this issue and expects the project to meet its target August 31. For the

vocational training program, Kelly said Caritas has been unable to attract Iraqis to traditional vocational training programs, as they have been reluctant to take the time away from any income-earning opportunities. Instead, Kelly proposes to develop apprenticeship opportunities for young Iraqis, where they could learn trades while earning money. An apprenticeship program strikes us as an appropriate solution.

Kelly also acknowledged that, as more time passes from the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, it is becoming difficult to classify Iraqis in Lebanon as refugees and asylum seekers. Kelly observed that most Iraqis in Lebanon seem to have made the calculated decision that their lives would be better in Lebanon than in Iraq, usually for security or economic reasons. Many Iraqis in Lebanon also seem to be irregular movers, in search of a new permanent home. For example, three of the four families we met were trying to be resettled outside the region and two had been accepted for humanitarian resettlement in Australia. (Only one family had been recognized by UNHCR as refugees.) And while all four families had at least one member who was capable of working and seemed to be coping on the periodic wages they earned, the families remained vulnerable in terms of access to services due to their non-citizen status. They simply could not afford the medical interventions or school fees covered under the grant. The real question seems to be how long these vulnerable Iraqis should be considered eligible for refugee assistance. Kelly suggested that EVI assistance should continue only until UNHCR begins an assisted return program for Iraqis.

1E. ICMC's staffing level seems appropriate for the program, and the team of four social workers seems to be fully and gainfully employed.

1F. The program is run out of Caritas' Migrants Center. The project workspace is clean and well-organized. All equipment seems to be in good working order and used on a regular basis. An acceptable inventory system is in place.

1G. N/A

1H. Nearly a year after the fall of Baghdad, it seems increasingly difficult to justify continued assistance to Iraqis living outside Iraq. Humanitarian needs certainly exist among this population, but those Iraqis who remain in Lebanon nearly a year after the fall of Baghdad seem to fit the definition of economic migrant or irregular mover, rather than refugee. Should PRM continue to support assistance programs for vulnerable Iraqis in Lebanon, we recommend that the program be carefully tailored to reflect UNHCR policy on assisted returns. As soon as UNHCR lifts its temporary protection order for Iraqis and organizes assisted returns, PRM-funded assistance programs should change to support voluntary repatriation.

12. Embassy Beirut cleared this message.

GNEHM